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ing thought, the system of distribution can be changed so as to give consumers a more adequate supply of goods at a less cost, then possibly there may be no finality in the conclusion based on the old assumptions, according to which food prices and rents of agricultural land would tend to be high, profits low, and wealth would centralize in the hands of the agricultural landlord class. Possibly it does make a difference to the producers whether they themselves control the marketing organizations or middlemen control such organizations; and to the consumers whether consumers control the distributive processes or profiteers control them. Mr. Lloyd shows how the struggle for control of markets by middlemen affects the interests of the producer and discourages production. The principal kind of control assumed by traditional theory was political. This control, exercised by the landlord government in its own interests, the classical theorists, who were the exponents of the new industrial order, thought to be bad. Any government control today is considered impracticable by the business interests, though there is no consistency at this point.

Mr. Lloyd's main conclusion is that control of distribution by producers instead of by middlemen has increased food production, but he does not think that such control would follow the usual development, namely, that when well intrenched, the growers, like capital and labor, would limit the supply in order to increase their advantage.

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The Nonpartisan League. By HERBERT E. GASTON. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe. 1920. Pp. 325.)

Many articles both favorable and unfavorable have been written concerning the National Nonpartisan League, of which Arthur C. Townley is the creator and head, and which is another name for what is called the "new day" in North Dakota. This book by Mr. Gaston is, however, the first authoritative, and to a certain extent unbiased, statement of the genesis and growth of the movement. Three years' employment on the publication controlled by the league has given Mr. Gaston an intimate knowledge of the organization, and, although the reader is assured of a "conscientious effort to make a faithful report of facts of essential interest," favorable conclusions are the rule. This point should be kept in view in judging the matter presented.

According to the claims made, the league is an organization having a membership of some 200,000 persons in thirteen western states. With the exception of Wisconsin, all these states lie west of the Mississippi River. It is entirely and exclusively a farmer's organization and, moreover, one of working farmers. The average member is the farmer who, with his family, cultivates his own farm, which is usually from a quarter section of 160 acres to a full section in extent. North Dakota is the most important center of activity, and it is there that the political program of the organization is being enacted into law. The statement is made, and is probably true, that North Dakota conditions and North Dakota psychology are in large part responsible for the league's existence.

The beginnings of the league date back to 1915 and the whole movement is a capitalization of conditions by its organizers. North Dakota is essentially a one-crop state and the growing of wheat is thus the principal industry. The complaint of the farmers was that at the outside owned elevators they did not receive fair treatment, especially in the grading of their wheat. It was believed that the farmers should have received better grades for their wheat, and a corresponding increase in price, inasmuch as the terminal elevators found it possible to buy 100,000 bushels of so-called No. 2 and No. 3 wheat and mix it with No. 1 Northern and sell the whole mixture for No. 1 Northern, and mix all of the so-called No. 4 and lower grades with what was left of the No. 2 and No. 3 wheat and sell the mixture as No. 2 and No. 3 wheat. The farmer believed that he was being cheated both in grades and weights and would continue to be cheated so long as the Minnesota grading controlled. The elevator operators said it was quite fair to mix, for instance, No. 1 Northern having a surplus over the required weight per bushel with grain just a little under the required weight and to make the whole mixture No. 1, and they also said that by cleaning, evaporation of moisture, and other means known to the large elevators, they could improve the grade, quality, and salability of grain.

The idea grew that the building of large state-owned elevators and flour mills would make it possible for the state to regulate the grades. The mandate of a popular vote approved the project, and the legislature commissioned members of the State Board of Control to make an investigation and to report plans and specifications for the construction of a state-owned elevator or state-owned elevators. The report was an adverse one, and when delegations

of farmers visited the legislature and demanded hearings before committees, hot arguments developed; during one of these an angry legislator is reported to have demanded by what right "a bunch of farmers come down here to browbeat the legislature," and ended by advising them to "go home and slop the hogs." This derisive advice became the slogan in the fight of the farmers against the ruling political group.

These grievances and others, real or imaginary, combined with the feeling that the towns were in a business conspiracy against them, made the farmers ready to follow a radical leader. Such a leader was Townley, the man with an idea, as Mr. Gaston calls him. Mr. Townley had failed as a flax farmer and was now ready to lead a social crusade. What he had seen and heard had convinced him that the farmers were ready to desert the old parties and form a new organization if anything was offered which held hope of being better. "Townley was determined to offer them something better. The Nonpartisan League was born in his brain at the city of Bismarck in February of 1915." Having made a few converts he devised a unique scheme for organizing the new movement. A selected group of organizers was sent out in "Fords" to explain personally the merits of the new organization to the farmers and solicit them to join. Each farmer was to pay a fee finally fixed at \$16 for two years. Townley it is said had reasoned out in advance that a man with \$16 at stake would stand by a political organization, if only "to get the worth of his money," or to convince himself and his neighbors that he had not been cheated.

The organization grew and, instead of forming a new party, gradually got control of the Republican party machinery. In 1918 the league elected the governor and got control of both houses of the legislature of North Dakota. Various constitutional amendments and legislative acts to carry into effect an industrial program and to permit state bond issues to finance the enterprise were passed. The acts involved were those establishing a state industrial commission; a state bank capitalized at \$2,000,000 and operated under the commissioner's supervision; a milling and elevator association and a home building association. Another statute provided for a \$10,000,000 revolving fund from which loans could be made by the bank on real estate. These statutes were attacked in two separate proceedings instituted by taxpayers to enjoin state officials from enforcing them. The North Dakota Supreme Court in both cases declared the acts constitutional. An

appeal was made to the United States Supreme Court which in June, 1920, refused to interfere with the decision of the North Dakota Supreme Court declaring these acts constitutional.

State socialism is the real essence of the movement. The measures creating state-owned enterprises have been carried by substantial majorities in referendum votes and the state seems committed to a tryout on a considerable scale of socialistic ideas. Aside from a doubtful loyalty during the war, the league has thriven on the abuse of its enemies. The opponents of the movement have not met the issue squarely and by mud slinging and vituperation have made any candid and unbiased consideration of the movement impossible. To the soft impeachment "Townley is a dead-beat and you are a socialist" the retort is, "You are trying to farm the farmers and belong to the old gang." Even if all this were true, such railing is not argument. It leads nowhere. No votes are changed.

Concerning two incidents, Mr. Gaston gives only the facts favorable to the league. Concerning one incident he says: "Neil Macdonald, superintendent of public instruction, indorsed by the league, was defeated by Miss Minnie Neilson of Valley City, who had been superintendent of the Barnes county schools. The election of Miss Neilson was due to the support of the anti-league forces and of women's organizations in which she had been active, women having the vote for that office." As a matter of fact, the rebellion of the women teachers against the methods of Mr. Macdonald as superintendent was probably the largest factor in Miss Neilson's election. But that is not the whole story; Mr. Macdonald was a poor loser and so a new office was created for him. Not only that, but many of the prerogatives of the state superintendent were taken away from Miss Neilson and given to her defeated rival. The incident is a flagrant example of bad politics in education and an exhibition of poor sportsmanship. The other incident is in connection with the closing of the Scandinavian-American bank at Fargo. The bank had made loans to various individuals and enterprises affiliated more or less closely with the league. A majority of the State Banking Board declared the bank insolvent and ordered its doors closed. As the majority on the board consisted of two men who had turned against the league the explanation was made that the move was purely a political one. The bank was reopened. The thing to be noticed, however, is this—since then the endeavor has been made to put it on a sound basis in accordance with good banking practice.

The weakness of the Nonpartisan movement lies in the fact that ideas and measures are handed down from a small controlling group. The idea of what is generally understood as coöperation is absent. The members of the league have no stake in the various enterprises for the money is provided by the state. The success of such state-owned enterprises depends, of course, upon the efficiency of management and fidelity to sound business principles on the part of the men chosen to direct them. The absence of direct financial responsibility is a weak link in the chain and, human nature being what it is, such a condition sooner or later will bring about a following whose main interest will be the loaves and the fishes. Economic success and political success are different terms. Banks, flour mills, and grain elevators have little in common with politics.

The book is an interesting account of a social movement which has evidently gained considerable momentum and which already dominates in North Dakota and bids fair to extend into other states. The narrative, also, is a fair presentation of facts concerning an important experiment in both politics and economics.

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